

In the Claims:

1-11 (cancelled)

12. (currently amended) ~~The combination as recited in claim 11,~~ A thruster boat combination comprising:

a) a boat comprising a hull having a water line, side walls, a bottom wall, and a transom, with said bottom wall comprising two wall sections which extend from side locations in a downward and laterally inward slant to a central juncture location of the two bottom wall sections, and with said transom meeting said bottom and side walls at bottom and side edge locations thereof, said boat having a thrust operating mode where the boat is stationary or is moving at a sufficiently low speed so that water remains adjacent to the transom;

b) a thruster which is mounted at the transom of the boat so as to provide lateral thrust, said thruster comprising:

i) a central thrusting section which has a lengthwise axis and comprises a central housing that defines a through passageway that is generally aligned with said lengthwise axis and has two oppositely positioned outer end portions, each of which defines an end opening;

ii) a propeller section positioned in said through passageway;

c) two extension members that are positioned at opposite sides of the central housing, with each extension member having an inner end portion adjacent to a related one of said outer end portions of the central housing and extending outwardly therefrom, each extension member having a lower perimeter edge

portion which is located so that with the thruster in an operating position and with the boat being in a lateral thrust operating mode, the perimeter edge portions of the two extension members are below the water line of the boat, each extension member having a lower downwardly facing surface that defines a flow passageway at the downwardly facing surface, said flow passageway having an inner end flow passageway portion adjacent one of the end openings of the central housing;

d) said thruster being configured and arranged, so that with the thruster located at the transom in its operating position:

i) when the boat is traveling at a sufficient speed through the water to cause the water to separate from the transom and form a transom wake surface, the thruster is substantially clear of the water that is at the transom wake surface,

ii) when the thruster is operating and the boat is in a lateral thrust operating mode, the two extension members have their lower perimeter edge portions located so that as water flows by the lower perimeter edge portions and into one of the end openings of the center housing, ambient air is substantially prevented from being entrained in the water entering into the center housing, and wherein a distance between outer end edges of the two extension members is no greater than about sixty percent and no less than about twenty five percent of a distance between outer edge locations of the transom where the bottom and side walls meet.

13. (currently amended) The combination as recited in ~~claim 11~~claim 12, wherein a distance between outer end edges of the two extension members is no greater than about fifty percent and no less than about thirty percent of a distance between outer edge locations of the transom where the bottom and side walls meet.

14. (cancelled) The combination as recited in claim 12~~claim 11~~, wherein a distance between outer end edges of the two extensions is no greater than about forty percent of a distance between outer edge locations of the transom where the bottom and side walls meet.

15. (cancelled) The combination as recited in claim 12~~claim 11~~, wherein a distance between outer end edges of the two extension members is no less than about thirty percent of a distance between outer edge locations of the transom where the bottom and side walls meet.

16. (currently amended) ~~The combination as recited in claim 15,~~ A thruster boat combination comprising:

a) a boat comprising a hull having a water line, side walls, a bottom wall, and a transom, with said bottom wall comprising two wall sections which extend from side locations in a downward and laterally inward slant to a central juncture location of the two bottom wall sections, and with said transom meeting said bottom and side walls at bottom and side edge locations thereof, said boat having a thrust operating mode where the boat is stationary or is moving at a sufficiently low speed so that water remains adjacent to the transom;

b) a thruster which is mounted at the transom of the boat so as to provide lateral thrust, said thruster comprising:

i) a central thrusting section which has a lengthwise axis and comprises a central housing that defines a through passageway that is generally aligned with said lengthwise axis and has two oppositely positioned outer end portions, each of which defines an end opening;

ii) a propeller section positioned in said through passageway;

c) two extension members that are positioned at opposite sides of the central housing, with each extension member having an inner end portion adjacent to a related one of said outer end portions of the central housing and extending outwardly therefrom, each extension member having a lower perimeter edge portion which is located so that with the thruster in an operating position and with the boat being in a lateral thrust operating mode, the perimeter edge portions of the two extension members are below the water line of the boat, each extension member having a lower downwardly facing surface that defines a flow passageway at the downwardly facing surface, said flow passageway having an inner end flow passageway portion adjacent one of the end openings of the central housing;

d) said thruster being configured and arranged, so that with the thruster located at the transom in its operating position:

i) when the boat is traveling at a sufficient speed through the water to cause the water to separate from the transom and form a transom wake surface,

the thruster is substantially clear of the water that is at the transom wake surface.

ii) when the thruster is operating and the boat is in a lateral thrust operating mode, the two extension members have their lower perimeter edge portions located so that as water flows by the lower perimeter edge portions and into one of the end openings of the center housing, ambient air is substantially prevented from being entrained in the water entering into the center housing, and

a) wherein a distance between outer end edges of the two extension members is no greater than about sixty percent and no less than about twenty five percent of a distance between outer edge locations of the transom where the bottom and side walls meet,

b) wherein a distance between outer end edges of the two extension members is no less than about thirty percent of a distance between outer edge locations of the transom where the bottom and side walls meet, and

c) wherein a distance between outer end edges of the two extensions is no less than about forty percent of a distance between edge locations of the transom where the bottom and side walls meet.

17. (original) The combination as recited in claim 12, wherein each end opening of the housing is defined by a surrounding rim having a depth dimension, each of said extension members having a maximum width dimension extending from one side of said extension member to the other side thereof, said maximum width dimension being at least about equal to or greater than the depth dimension of the end opening of the housing adjacent to that extension member.

18. (original) The combination as recited in claim 17, wherein each of said extension members has its downwardly facing surface shaped so that the flow passageway has a greater depth dimension at said inner end flow passageway portion and a lesser depth dimension at an outer end portion of said extension member.
19. (original) The combination as recited in claim 12, wherein a substantial portion of the perimeter edge portion of each extension member is below an upper portion of a surrounding rim defining the end opening of the central housing by a distance that is at least about one-half of a depth dimension of the end opening defined by the surrounding rim.
20. (original) The combination as recited in claim 12, wherein each end opening of the housing is defined by a surrounding rim defining the end opening, each of said end openings have a depth dimension, each extension member having an inner end portion adjacent to its related end opening, an outer end portion, and a length dimension from said inner end portion to the outer end portion, with a length dimension from said inner end portion to said outer end portion of the extension member being at least as great as the depth dimension of its related end opening.
21. (original) The combination as recited in claim 20 wherein said length dimension from said inner end portion to said outer end portion of the extension member is at least as great as one and one-half times said depth dimension.
22. (original) The combination as recited in claim 15, wherein a length dimension of the central housing section of the thruster is between about nine percent to thirty

percent of a length dimension between outer edge locations of the transom where the side walls meet the bottom wall.

23. (original) The combination as recited in claim 15, wherein a length dimension of the central housing section of the thruster is no greater than about thirteen percent to about twenty percent of a length dimension between outer edge locations of the transom where the side walls meet the bottom wall.

24. (original) The combination as recited in claim 15, wherein a length dimension of the central housing section of the thruster is about nine percent to three-twentieths of a length dimension between outer edge locations of the transom where the side walls meet the bottom wall.

25. (currently amended) The combination as recited in ~~claim 11~~claim 12, wherein an upper portion of said center housing of the thruster is at a depth below the water line of the boat which is less than a distance equal to a vertical dimension of the end opening of the passageway of the central housing.

26. (original) The combination as recited in claim 25, wherein the upper portion of the center housing of the thruster is at or adjacent to the water line of the boat.

27. (currently amended) The combination as recited in claim 12~~claim 11~~, wherein a vertical dimension of one of the end openings of the passageway of the central housing is no less than about two-thirds of a vertical distance between the water line and a lower portion of the transom of the boat.

28. (currently amended) The combination as recited in claim 12~~claim 11~~, wherein a vertical dimension of one of the openings of the passageway of the central

housing is no less than about three-quarter of a vertical distance between the water line and a lower portion of the transom of the boat.

29. (currently amended) The combination as recited in claim 12~~claim 11~~, wherein a vertical dimension of one of the openings of the passageway of the central housing is no less than about eighty-one percent of a vertical distance between the water line and a lower portion of the transom of the boat.

30-64. (cancelled)